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Message Text

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21
ACTION NEA-10

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DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 /052 W
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R 071200Z APR 76
FM AMCONSUL LAHORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 789
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMCONSUL KARACHI

C O N F I D E N T I A L LAHORE 0438

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PK
SUBJECT: AHMAD RAZA KASURI (MNA) REJOINS PPP

SUMMARY: AHMAD RAZA KASURI, MNA (INDEPENDENT), ANNOUNCED DECISION TO REJOIN PPP IN LAHORE APRIL 6. ACCORDING PRESS, KASURI SAID HE HAD BECOME CONVINCED THAT ONLY PPP UNDER BHUTTO COULD SOLVE COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS. SIGNS OF RECON-CILIATION HAD BEEN GROWING IN RECENT WEEKS, INCLUDING STORY IN PRESS, LATER REFUTED, THAT AHMAD RAZA WOULD GO ABROAD WITH FOUR-MAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION ARPIL 10 AFTER ANNOUNCING REAFFILIATION WITH PPP. OBSERVERS HERE VIEW DECISION AS NECESSARY STEP KASURI HAD TO TAKE TO SURVIVE POLITICALLY IN NEXT GENERAL ELECTIONS. HIS RETURN TO PPP IS ANOTHER TRIUMPH FOR BHUTTO, WHO AGAIN USED PERSONAL MAGIC AND POWER OF PATRONAGE TO WEAKEN OPPOSITION FURTHER IN PUNJAB. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCORDING LOCAL PRESS APRIL 7, SAHIBZADA AHMAD RAZA KASURI, MNA (INDEPENDENT), ANNOUNCED DECISION TO REJOIN PAKISTAN PEOPLES PARTY (PPP) WHILE ADDRESSING GATHERING OF PPP WORKERS AT HIS MODEL TOWN RESIDENCE IN LAHORE PREVIOUS DAY. HE REPORTEDLY MET WITH BEGUM NUSRAT BHUTTO EARLIER TO INFORM HER OF HIS DECISION.

2. IN SPEECH TO PPP WORKERS, KASURI SAID HE HAD MADE A
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"DISPASSIONATE" STUDY OF COUNTRY'S POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC

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SITUATION AND REACHED CONCLUSION THAT ONLY PPP, UNDER BHUTTO'S LEADERSHIP, WAS CAPABLE OF SOLVING COUNTRY'S PROBLEMS. HE SAID HE HAD REMAINED IN OPPOSITION FOR ABOUT FOUR YEARS BUT DECIDED NOW TO REJOIN PARTY WITH "NO PRECONDITIONS." (KASURI, A FOUNDER MEMBER OF PPP, WAS ELECTED TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN 1970 ON PARTY TICKET. HE LEFT PPP BECAUSE OF DIFFERENCES WITH BHUTTO OVER EAST PAKISTAN SITUATION AND JOINED ASGHAR KHAN'S TEHRIK-I-ISTIQLAL IN 1972. THREE YEARS LATER HE SEVERED TIES WITH TEHRIK AND BECAME INDEPENDENT.)

3. THERE HAVE BEEN INCREASING INDICATIONS IN RECENT WEEKS THAT AHMAD RAZA WOULD RETURN TO PPP FOLD. DURING CHAT WITH CONGEN LAHORE POLOFF (GIBNEY) AT DINNER PARTY IN ISLAMABAD MARCH 12, KASURI REFRAINED FROM CRITICIZING BHUTTO, EMPHASIZING INSTEAD "RESPONSIBLE ROLE HE WISHED TO PLAY IN PARLIAMENT." SUBSEQUENTLY, ARTICLE APPEARED IN PRO-OPPOSITION URDU VERNACULAR NAWA-WAQT MARCH 17 ABOUT MEETING KASURI REPORTEDLY HAD WITH BHUTTO IN PM'S CHAMBERS AT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. STORY IMPLIED THAT TWO WERE MOVING TOWARD RECONCILIATION. ON APRIL 5 SECOND ARTICLE APPEARED IN NAWA-I-WAQT THAT KASURI WOULD PARTICIPATE IN FOUR-MAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION (OTHER THREE ARE PPP MNAS) GOING ON EXTENSIVE FOREIGN TOUR APRIL 10, AND WOULD REJOIN PPP BEFORE LEAVING. SUBSEQUENT PRESS ARTICLES, HOWEVER DENIED THIS.

4. USUALLY WELL INFORMED POLITICAL SOURCE TOLD ME APRIL 6 KASURI DINED QUIETLY WITH PRIMIN AND BEGUM BHUTTO RECENTLY IN ISLAMABAD WHERE SCENARIO OF HIS REJOING PPP WAS WORKED OUT, INCLUDING HIS INCLUSION IN PARLIAMENTARY TOUR AS SWEETENER.

5. GIBNEY RECEIVED FURTHER EVIDENCE OF POSSIBLE RECON-CILIATION DURING VISIT TO KASUR MARCH 16 WITH NEA PAKISTAN DESK OFFICWJR PECK. HOST FOR VISIT WAS AHMAD RAZA'S YOUNGER BROTHER KHIZER, KNOWN FOR VITRIOLIC ANTI-BHUTTO STANCE. KHIZER, HOWEVER, WITHHELD ANY CRITICISM OF BHUTTO AND AT ONE POINT EVEN SPOKE OF HIM AS "STATESMAN." THIS WAS IN SHARP CONTPAST TO STATEMENTS HE MADE CRITICAL OF BHUTTO DURING EARLIER VISIT CONGEN AND EMBASSY POL OFFICERS MADE TO KASUR CONFIDENTIAL

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LAST NOVEMBER.

6. AHMAD RAZA'S MOTHER, POWERFUL MATRIARCH OF LARGE AND IMPORTANT KASURI FAMILY, HAD FOR LONG TIM OPPOSED ANY RECONCILIATION BECAUSE OF HER BELIEF THAT PPP HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR HER HUSBAND'S DEATH IN LAHORE SHOOTING NOVEMBER 1974. (IT WAS WIDELY ASSUMED PRO-GOVERNMENT POLITICAL ELEMENTS WERE ATTEMPTING ASSASSINATE AHMAD RAZA

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BUT MISSED AND KILLED FATHER INSTEAD, WHO WAS RIDING IN SAME CAR.) MRS. BHUTOO'S MEETING WITH KASURI FAMILY IS GENERALLY VIEWED HERE AS CONCILIATORY GESTURE TO MOLLIFY MOTHER'S FEELINGS. GIBNEY, WHO KNOWS KASURIS WELL, WAS INVITED TWICE BY DIFFERENT FAMILY MEMBERS TO ATTEND MEETING, PRESUMABLY TO LEND FURTHER SUPPORT TO FAMILY'S INTEREST. INVITATIONS, OF COURSE, WERE RESPECTFULLY DECLINED.

7. OBSERVERS HERE OPINE THAT PRINCIPAL REASON FOR RECONCILIATION IS AHMAD RAZA'S OVERRIDING NEED TO OBTAIN PPP TICKET IN UP-COMING GENERAL ELECTIONS IF HE PD TO SURVIVE POLITICALLY. IT IS ASSUMED HE COULD NOT POSSIBLY WIN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SEAT AS INDEPENDENT. WHILE HE NEEDS BHUTTO FAR MORE THAT LATTER NEEDS HIM, GETTING HIM BACK INTO PPP FOLD IS LOCAL COUP FOR PRIMIN. DESPITE WELL DESERVED REPUTATION AS STORMY PETREL, HE IS A SKILLED PARLIAMENTARIAN AND HIS CONSIDERABLE ORATORICAL TALENTS COULD PROVE USEFUL TO PPP IN GENERAL ELECTIONS. PERSUASION APPARENTLY SUCCEEDED WHERE ATTEMPTS BY GOVERNMENT TO INTIMIDATE KASURI HAD FAILED.
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